

THE ADMINISTRATION AND CIVIL RIGHTS LEGISLATION

President Eisenhower, in his 1957 State of the Union Message reemphasized that we in this nation have much reason to be gratified at the progress our people are making in mutual understanding.

He reiterated that we are steadily moving closer to the goal of fair and equal treatment of all citizens without regard to race or color. The President observed, however, that "unhappily, much remains to be done." As a substantial step toward achieving this goal he urged passage of the following:

- I. Creation of a bipartisan commission to investigate asserted violations of law in the field of civil rights, especially involving the right to vote, and to make recommendations;
- II. Creation of a civil rights division in the Department of Justice in charge of a Presidentially appointed Assistant Attorney General;
- III. Enactment by the Congress of new laws to aid in the enforcement of voting rights;
- IV. Amendment of the laws so as to permit the Federal Government to seek from the civil courts preventive relief in civil rights cases.

I. CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSIONS - In recommending originally in 1956 the creation of a bipartisan civil rights commission, President Eisenhower said: "It is disturbing that in some localities allegations persist that Negro citizens are being deprived of their right to vote and are likewise being subjected to unwarranted economic pressures. I recommend that the substance of these charges be thoroughly examined by a bipartisan commission created by the Congress."

Above and beyond the need for improving the legal remedies for dealing with specific civil rights violations is the need for greater knowledge and understanding of all of the complex problems involved. The bipartisan Executive Commission would be a temporary body designed to obtain information and not a continuing agency.

II. CIVIL RIGHTS DIVISION IN THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE - At present the Civil Rights Section of the Department of Justice is one of a number of sections located within the Criminal Division. The protection of civil rights guaranteed by the Constitution is a governmental responsibility of first importance. More emphasis should be on civil law remedies, and the civil rights enforcement activities of the Department of Justice should not, therefore, be confined to the Criminal Division.

III. AMENDMENTS TO GIVE GREATER PROTECTION TO THE RIGHT TO VOTE AND TO PROVIDE CIVIL REMEDIES IN THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE FOR THEIR ENFORCEMENT - The right to vote is the one right, perhaps more than any other, upon which all other constitutional rights depend for their effective protection.

